

THE Furrow

**Worship In Place
July 2020**

Creation as Death and Resurrection

A Call to Worship

*Everyday
I see or hear
something
that more or less
kills me
with delight,
that leaves me
like a needle
in the haystack
of light.
It was what I was born for —
to look, to listen,
to lose myself
inside this soft world —
to instruct myself
over and over
in joy,
and acclamation.
Nor am I talking
about the exceptional,
the fearful, the dreadful,
the very extravagant —
but of the ordinary,
the common, the very drab,
the daily presentations.*

*Oh, good scholar,
I say to myself,
how can you help
 but grow wise
 with such teachings
 as these —
 the untrimmable light
of the world,
the ocean's shine,
the prayers that are made
out of grass?
 ("Mindful" by Mary Oliver from *Why I Wake Early*)*

Hymn of Creation

(Can be sung to the tune of Jesus Loves Me, omitting the chorus)

*Praise God for the budding green,
April's resurrection scene;
Praise God for the shining hours,
Starring all the land with flowers.*

*Praise God for the summer rain,
feeding, day and night, the grain;
Praise God for the tiny seed,
Holding all the world shall need.*

*Praise God for the garden root,
Meadow grass, and orchard fruit:
Praise for hills and valleys broad,
Each the table of our God.*

*Praise God for the winter's rest,
Snow that falls on nature's breast;
Praise for happy dreams of birth,
Brooding in the quiet earth.*

*(William C. Gannett, 1872, *The New Century Hymnal*)*

A Summer Prayer

May you breathe in the beauty of summer with its power of transformation. May this beauty permeate all that feels un-beautiful in you.

ALL: May the God of summer give us beauty.

May you seek and find spaces of repose during these summer months. May these moments refresh and restore the tired places within you.

ALL: May the God of summer give us rest.

May you be open to times of celebration and recreation that are so much a part of summer. May you find happiness in these times of play and leisure.

ALL: May the God of summer give us joy.

May your eyes see the wonders of summer's colors. May these colors delight you and entice you into contemplation and joy.

ALL: May the God of summer give us inner light.

May you feel the energy of summer rains penetrating thirsty gardens, golf courses, lawns, and farmlands. May these rains remind you that your inner thirst needs quenching. May your inner self be refreshed, restored, and renewed.

ALL: May the God of summer give us what we need for healing.

May you savor the fresh produce that comes to your table and enjoy the fruits of summer's bounty.

ALL: May the God of summer give us a sense of satisfaction in the work of our hands.

May you find shelter when the stormy skies of summer threaten your safety.

ALL: May the God of summer give us shelter when inner storms threaten our peace of mind and heart.

May you enjoy the unexpected and find surprises of beauty and happiness as you travel the roads on summer vacation.

ALL: May the God of summer lead us to amazing discoveries as we travel the inner roads of our soul as well.

(by Joyce Rupp & Macrina Wiederkehr, *The Circle of Life*)

Readings

A PASSAGE: PSALM 139:12

*“even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.”*



THE GOSPEL: JOHN 12:24-25 (THE MESSAGE)

“Listen carefully: Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat. But if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.

A POEM

*What stood will stand, though all be fallen,
The good return that time has stolen.
Though creatures groan in misery,
Their flesh prefigures liberty
To end travail and bring to birth
Their new perfection in new earth.
At word of that enlivening
Let the trees of the woods all sing
And every field rejoice, let praise
Rise up out of the ground like grass.
What stood, whole in every piecemeal
Thing that stood, will stand though all
Fall — field and woods and all in them
Rejoin the primal Sabbath’s hymn.
(Wendell Berry, *This Day*)*

Spiritual Tool Options

- ✿ Cell phone camera (for “receiving images as gifts”, not “taking photos”)
- ✿ Mindfulness Bell app (free, with optional upgrade), or simply your phone’s built-in timer
- ✿ Some means of recording experiences - journal, notepaper, voice recorder, etc.

Reflections With Creation

- ✿ We often think of “resurrection” in springtime: nature greening following the long winter of “death.” Conveniently, the Christian calendar reinforces that awareness of new life by positioning Easter at springtime’s center.
- ✿ But resurrection is taking place all the time - the great cycle of death and new life is always turning. Blossoms flourish and then wilt. When we “dead head” the spent flower, another is born to take its place. Day lilies live up to their name. Every day is an undulation of riot and rot, flourishing and withering.
- ✿ In the heat of summer, it is easy to spot the “withering.” Lawns are browning. Flowers are wilting. The very earth is drying and cracking.

- ✿ But what is being born - what is coming into life at the same time that others are dying? To determine when garlic is ready to harvest, watch for the leaves to die. Similarly, potatoes are ready for digging when the plant above the ground wilts. Birth and death. Dying and rising. The two are inseparably and constantly intertwined.
- ✿ Set a timer, using the Mindfulness Bell app or some other device - for a minimum of 15 minutes but preferably longer - a half-hour, perhaps.
- ✿ Take a slow walk outdoors - around your yard or down your street; through a park or into the woods.
- ✿ What do you observe that is dying away? With each, recall what it was like in its full prime. Consider its life cycle - has it thrived for days or weeks or months, or perhaps only hours? What is happening to cause the withering?
- ✿ What do you observe that is being born into life? Is it just emerging, or entering its fullness? Consider its life cycle - how long will its vibrancy extend?
- ✿ Receive as a gift an image of these thresholds with your camera.
- ✿ When your timer alerts you, find a quiet place to sit with your images, your journal, and your thoughts.
- ✿ Where is this pattern of life and death, rotting and rioting, occurring in your life? What elements, once vibrant and beautiful, are beginning to yellow and wither, and what do you notice coming into life?
- ✿ In light of these witherings and risings, reflect on this poem by Wendell Berry:

*As timely as a river
 God's timeless life passes
 Into this world. It passes
 Through bodies, giving life,
 And past them, giving death.
 The secret fish leaps up
 Into the light and is
 Again darkened. The sun
 Comes from the dark, it lights
 The always passing river,
 Shines on the great-branched tree,
 And goes. Longing and dark,
 We are completely filled
 With breath of love, in us
 Forever incomplete.*

(Wendell Berry, *This Day: Collected and New Sabbath Poems*)

- ✿ How do your observations both around you and within you bear witness to those closing words, “*We are completely filled with breath of love, in us forever incomplete*”?
- ✿ Journal your observations and insights, and consider sharing something of your experiences via the “Contact Us” tab at TheFurrow.org. We will look forward to posting a collage of the responses we receive.
- ✿ Close with a prayer of self-offering, and for a heightened awareness of and gratitude for the “new things” that God has done and is doing in and around you.

Benediction

Hold closely this sacred reminder:

*Sometimes I need
Only to stand
Wherever I am
To be blessed.*

—Mary Oliver